

MAY 3 1966



Random

By RICHARD  
WATTS JR.

## Notes on this and that

Neither of last week's openings, both off-Broadway presentations, served greatly to advance the state of the drama . . . While "The World of Gunter Grass" was virtually non-existent theatrically, it did provide some provocative, perverse and disturbing insights into the original mind and bizarre imagination of Germany's most impressive postwar novelist . . . As it turned out, "Bohikee Creek" was actually not a play but a quartet of mood sketches about life in a small Negro community in the back waters of South Carolina . . . All four interludes seemed plain and clear, but I'm still uncertain of what took place behind a wharf in the final one.

Whatever else the New York Times series on CIA demonstrated, it also suggested that the current melodramatic novel about espionage aren't necessarily exaggerated . . . Then there was the indication that advances in electronics may throw a lot of career spies out of work . . . Since even those who believe our stand in Viet Nam is necessary are uncomfortable over it, I thought Sen. Fulbright was an extremist when he called it a sign of "the

arrogance of power" and "war fever" . . . It is, of course, a matter of conjecture, but I wonder if Indonesia would have become so bold toward Peking if we had fled from Southeast Asia.

It is evident that Indra Gandhi is having her troubles in India, but she can at least be congratulated on having the unpleasant Krishna Menon turn against her . . . The apparently growing restlessness of the Barcelona students hints that the presumed Spanish contentment with the Franco dictatorship may have been overestimated . . . News from Peking that the visiting Albanian premier was accorded a gigantic reception shows the almost pathetic eagerness of the Chinese to have proof any Communist country or leader on their side . . . They can't have forgot-

ten that their last welcome guest was Nkrumah, who hardly profited by his visit.

The late Hesketh Pearson's zestful appreciation of zestful people contributed greatly to making him one of the best of modern biographers . . . In the posthumous "Hesketh Pearson by Himself," the same warm vitality applied to his own varied career results in a frank and delightfully volume of memoirs . . . He contemplates his richly active life as soldier, actor and author with humor and candor, and his sidelights on the men who served as his subjects, especially Shaw, combine perceptiveness with a genuine liking for them . . . The frankness extends to his objective way of viewing his propensity for getting into personal jams of his own.

B. Traven, author of "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre," is a mysterious American who lives a life of secrecy in Mexico and seems to be known to no one . . . That he is more than a determined eccentric is shown in his "The Night Visitor and Other Stories" . . . Ranging in subject from folk legend to peasant ways, these short tales, filled with affection for Mexicans, are fresh, simple and touching . . . Francis Clifford's "The Naked Runner" adds a vigorous touch of moral outrage to a dramatic suspense novel on the chilling brutalities of espionage in East Germany . . . Intense and grimly realistic, it has an unusually tricky but believable ending.

No conventional guidebook is "Soho Night & Day," which has just been sent me from England . . . With Frank Norman's humorously knowing commentary and Jeffrey Bernard's striking photographs, it is an authoritative study, realistic but sympathetic, of the famous London district . . . The late Paula Strasberg was a devoted force in the theater and a fine woman . . . Tim Taylor, now writing a book of critical studies of Presidential press conferences, including LBJ's, was even braver when he did a column criticizing newspaper columnists . . . I admired Natalie Wood's humorous attitude toward the Harvard Lampoon's mock award until she called it